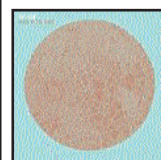


# MUSIC

with Helen Clarke



**Hot Chip**  
Made in the Dark  
Album  
(EMI)  
February 4  
★★☆☆☆

HOT CHIP have always worn their mission statement on their sleeve; to straddle, or rather hop, skip and jump, all over the indie/dance border. With current single, *Ready For The Floor*, they manage to capture heart-breaking sentiment with electro blips in a way only New Order have before.

A few other tracks make the grade. *Hold On* and *Out At The Pictures* stand out. The contrast between Alexis Taylor and Joe Goddard's weedy, indie boy vocals and the pounding, repetitive beats reach a new level. More accessible than LCD Soundsystem and just as effective.

But the rest of the album falls short and fades away, the potential seemingly collected from their past two albums and dumped in the first half of this record. The second half feels self-conscious, and the sparkle of *Ready For The Floor* gets swept away in overly ambitious clatter.



**Morrissey**  
That's How People  
Grow Up  
Single  
(Polydor)  
Out February 4  
★★★☆☆

A WEEK after his ill-fated Roundhouse residency, with illness forcing the cancellation of the last two dates, Morrissey returns with one of two new songs released on his *Greatest Hits* compilation. It's proof, yet again, that he can still write a killer tune and his snarling wit shows absolutely no sign of growing up.

"I was driving in my car. I crashed and broke my spine. So there are worse things in life than never being someone's sweetie." Sound familiar?

The term 'national treasure' sounds very grown-up, and is probably not what young Steven Morrissey would have aspired to, but there's no getting away from it. There may be less conviction in his voice, his lyrics may have mellowed, but give me 1,000 watered-down Morrissey songs over a soulless Britney track any day.



**Robots In Disguise**  
We're In The Music Biz  
Album  
(President Records)  
February 4  
★★★★☆

ROBOTS In Disguise have had a cult following across Europe since their debut was unleashed on the continent back in 2002.

But, according to their press release, they've got their sights set closer to home. A support slot this summer with The Gossip should seal the deal and this, their third album, won't do them any harm either.

Half icy-cool, Joan Jett attitude, half pop-kitsch Shampoo, it clashes punchy DIY riot grrll wailings with raucous electro bleeps.

It's filled with tales of late-night excess, of going out with your mates, and generally annoying everyone else. It's reminiscent of Shampoo's signature tracks, and rings true in a way that only a glittery, eyeliner-clad teenage girl would understand.

*I Can't Stop Getting Wasted* and *The Sex Has Made Me Stupid* don't hold back – a cider-fuelled riot with the cast of *High School Musical*. Their best album to date, *We're In The Music Biz* is addictive, cheeky pop.

informer review

# ♥ CUPID'S ARROWS ♥

## WHERE TO GO ON FEBRUARY 14



THEY'RE TASTY: Manager Umesh Bardwa (left) and chef Fakruddin Khan from African Queen

DATING IS NEVER EASY, AS NICK HASLAM KNOWS ONLY TOO WELL (RIGHT). MATCH PERSON, PLACE AND TIME WITH THE ADDED PRESSURE OF A DESIGNATED DATING DAY... AND MANY GIVE UP. SINGLES SNEER THAT THE EVENT IS A MARKETING TRICK BENEFITING RESTAURANTS, JEWELLERS AND FLORISTS. COUPLES SMUGLY SAY EVERY DAY IS VALENTINE'S DAY. YET IF YOU USE YOUR IMAGINATION, IT CAN BE THE PERFECT EXCUSE TO TREAT YOUR BETTER HALF OR COURT YOUR DREAMBOAT. CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN COMES UP WITH VALENTINE'S DAY IDEAS

### ♥ IDEA TWO ♥

THE NATIONAL Gallery's free guided tours could be a great pre or post-lunch touch. Discover the true story of Venus and Cupid while taking a whirl around one of the world's greatest collections of European paintings. 11.30am or 2.30pm, National Gallery, Trafalgar Square. Call 020 7747 2885. See [www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk).

Enjoy a grandstand view of Trafalgar Square at the National Gallery's restaurant, where the Valentine's lunch is £24.50 for two courses or £29.50 for three. Or if you fancy cheaper, delicious Japanese food nearby, try Zipangu at 8 Little Newport Street. Call 020 7437 5042. California rolls and plum wine recommended.

If it's just a treat you need (eat in or takeaway to surprise someone at their desk at work), try Maison Bertaux for delightful decor, hot chocolate/coffee and exquisite cakes. Maison Bertaux, 28 Greek Street, between Shaftesbury Road and Old Compton Road, Soho. Call 020 7437 6007.



LET IT ALL HANG OUT: Bronzino's An Allegory with Venus and Cupid from 1540, National Gallery

### ♥ IDEA ONE ♥

THE FREE glass for ladies from the champagne cocktail menu might not seem enough to lure anyone from the centre of town all the way out west to Hounslow for dinner on Valentine's Night.

But if you knew what the menu at the African Queen pub had in store, you might well reconsider, and hop on the tube.

Plenty of couples will be making a half-hour trip east to Brick Lane in search of London's best curry, but this East African-influenced Indian restaurant and pub delivers just as much at astounding prices.

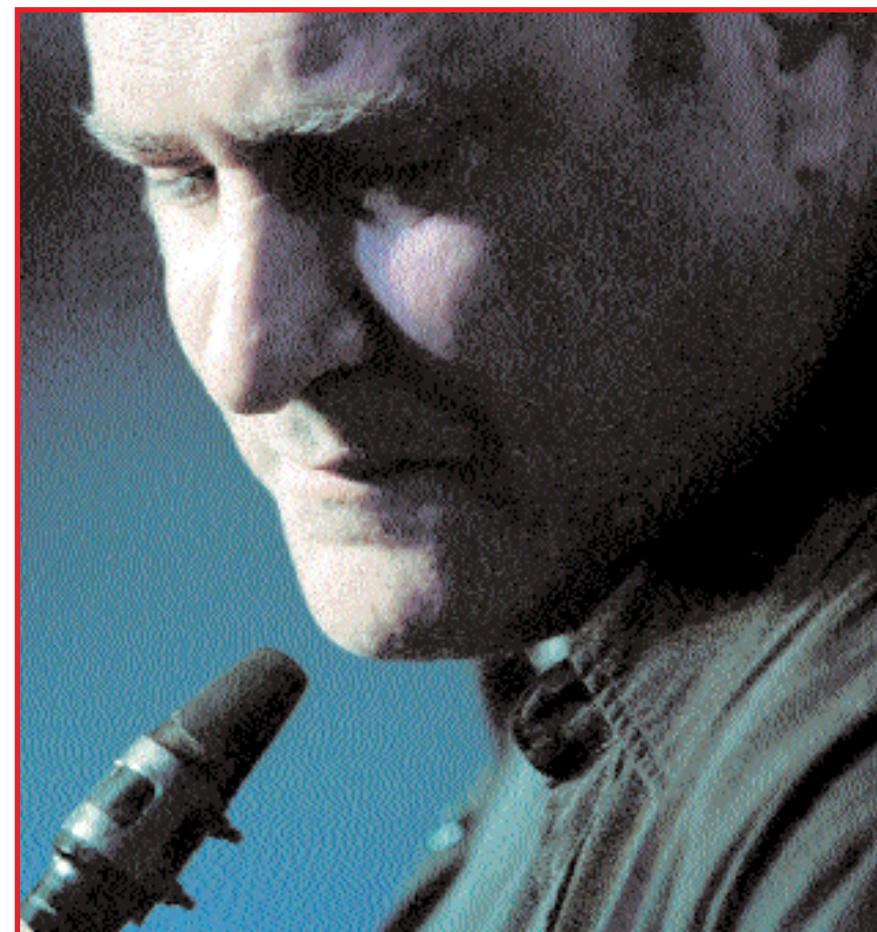
The only thing that compares, in my book, is Tyyabs in Whitechapel, but while you're queuing round the corner there, you could already be sitting comfortably in the equally frill-free atmosphere at African Queen.

Manager Umesh Bardwa says: "Most Indians don't even recognise all of the dishes on our menu. People are used to orange chicken tikka and red lamb chops because of the colourings."

"We've scrapped all that and are slowly introducing the true colours and tastes of our home countries."

Especially recommended are the 24-hour slow-cooked black lentil and bean stew, daal makhani, £4.25; the tandoor-cooked extra spicy marinated chicken wings, thikke patange, £4.25; garlic chilli chicken, £4.25; whole tandoori seabass, £8.50; and for those going all-out for foody romance, the lobster African Queen – fresh lobster treated with lime and tumeric, tossed in peppery onion and fennel masala, finished with coriander and served on naan, £19.95.

African Queen is in Wellington Road South, Hounslow. Nearest tube: Hounslow Central. Call 020 8572 8903.



JAZZ TREAT: Gilad Atzmon is playing at Twickenham's Rising Sun, for just £7

### ♥ IDEA THREE ♥

TO SEE Gilad Atzmon play is a rare treat usually reserved for those willing to pay for a seat at the Royal Festival Hall. He is one of the most unpredictable, inexplicable, unforgettable jazz musicians, and he's playing at Lesley and Kelvin Christiane's Rising Sun pub in Twickenham, with Valentine's Day tickets just £7 because of a beautiful backstory.

Gilad says: "Kelvin was the first person to give me a gig about 14 years ago when I arrived in the UK. I love him, and to this day we still play together whenever we can."

A master of sax and clarinet, having teamed up with musicians beyond jazz circles from Sinead O'Connor to Paul McCartney, it was a near-death experience that began his life as a musician.

An avid rock-climber, Gilad fell off a cliff in Palestinian territory at the age of 17. Bedridden for a year, ever-joking Gilad describes the experience as "a wonderful thing".

Why? "That was when I first heard Charlie Parker! I was practising 24 hours a day the whole year. It was great. I really look forward to the next accident!" Of his style he says: "I never have a plan, the notes come out faster than I can think. I just go as loud and as fast as I can and everybody loves it."

Gilad Atzmon, Richmond and Twickenham Jazz Club, Rising Sun pub, 277 Richmond Road, Marble Hill Park, Twickenham. Rail: St Margarets. Call 020 8892 9277. See [kcmusic.co.uk](http://kcmusic.co.uk)

### ♥ IDEA FOUR ♥

TO PROVE love has no age limit, an OAPs' Valentine's Day Tea Dance at the Irish Cultural Centre, Blacks Road, Hammersmith, will whip up a storm in a teacup with Wichita playing lively Irish music. All senior citizens welcome. Turn up, or tell someone who might secretly be hoping for a hot date. £4 with tea and biscuits. 1.30-4.30pm with an open bar. Call 020 8563 8232. See [www.irishcentrehammersmith.co.uk](http://www.irishcentrehammersmith.co.uk)

### ♥ MY FUNNY ♥ VALENTINE

NICK HASLAM, 24, of Westbourne Park is a classic Valentine's Day casualty. Over the next four weeks he'll be sharing his story for 2008 as he tries to break the cycle of drunken, lonely-heart nights

IT'S THAT time of year again – I'm single, and Valentine's Day is approaching. Panic. But this doesn't come as a surprise. I'm always single on Valentine's Day. And what's worse, I've spent the last seven of them with the same guy, my best mate Bert, whose love life is as bad as mine.

We've got ourselves into a bit of a rut, you could say. For both of us, the day has a slightly comical air of impending disaster about it. We are also both incurable romantics.

Usually, we've set ourselves the task of finding a date, which we never do. We then laugh nervously about how bad we are with women and go to the pub to drown our sorrows.

It's a winning formula. The tradition began when we travelled together in India. It continued throughout three years of university and followed us to Italy and America where we were both studying. One year I even took freshly picked flowers to him, so he could give them to his crush of the moment. No luck, obviously.

Another year we went for a romantic meal to McDonald's, as happy couples strolled past the window arm in arm.

A third year my friend looked after his crush's dog while she went out with her boyfriend, and I drank myself into oblivion in a bar.

The problem is that we find the whole affair so funny that we've both given up hope of ever actually reversing the trend.

So this year I'm determined it's going to be different. I'm going to find a date. It can't be that hard really. And after all, with my record, things can only get better!



CHECK NEXT WEEK'S LONDON INFORMER TO FIND OUT HOW NICK'S QUEST FOR LOVE DEVELOPS